

Dear members of California Department of Education,

I've been living in Sacramento County for more than 2 decades. I came from Japan originally, but half of my entire life has been spent here. So this is my second home to me. I have 2 kids in high school, and have another one in 1st grade. Ever since I became as a parent, I learned a lot from my kids on "what takes to be a parent." I wish I could say "Thank you" to my father who passed away 10 years ago by cancer. He was also an elementary school teacher in Japan.

During my learning phase of the parenthood, I was quite impressed by the education system at public schools. Many parents, including me, were heavily involved in the learning phase of young kids. Some volunteered at class room, and many helped kids' study at home every day. It was a pleasant surprise for me because most parents where I grew up seemed solely relied on the schools for kids' education.

However, the California education environment – especially History-Social Science – seem to be changing dramatically these days and I'm concerned. That's why I've decided to write this message.

I was wondering for a long time how the History-Social Science study should be. When I grew up, we learned lots of historical events as "what had happened at where in what year". Students who were good at memorizing these historical events usually got better grade. It merely became memory game.

I work as a failure analysis engineer for semiconductor chips which are used in many electrical gadgets like phone or tablet. You may or may not know that ample chips would go under various reliability stress tests to ensure the quality of the chips before we can start manufacturing. Occasionally some chips do fail during stress tests, and that's when I start analyzing "why" they failed. If the "reason for failure" is severe and more chips could potentially fail, we must fix the problem before we can start manufacturing.

Then it hit me like this: "shouldn't History-Social Science study be look like failure analysis?"

Rather than just focus on what happened, shouldn't students "learn why it happened so that they can prevent future recurrence of the similar issues?" American Philosopher George Santayana once said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". His aphorism is not simply telling to remember the past events, but to learn from the past mistakes. Just like failure analysis, we cannot do it right if we don't know how it happened.

But there is one important guideline for this – the historical events must be based solely on the facts.

Recently, it came to my attention that “2014-2016 Draft History-Social Science Framework” was inviting public to submit comments. As a parent of high school students, I was concerned that the following section was placed in the draft world history.

Chapter 15, page 469, line 914~920 says:

“Comfort Women,” a euphemism for sexual slaves, were taken by the Japanese Army in occupied territories before and during the war. “Comfort Women” can be taught as an example of institutionalized sexual slavery, and one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the twentieth century; estimates on the total number of comfort women vary, but most argue that hundreds of thousands of women were forced into these situations during Japanese occupation.

When I hear the term “sexual slave”, it brings me an awful memory of Jaycee Lee Dugard who was kidnapped and kept captive for 18 years in Antioch, CA. She was confined in the soundproof shack, sexually abused repeatedly, and cannot go anywhere without accompanied by the kidnapper. Also there are countless stories about Mexican girls who were smuggled into US, and forced to work as “sexual slave” for many years. Money she “earned” was split between pimp and the guy who delivered her from place to place. That’s probably what the term “sexual slave” reminds people of.

On the other hand, “comfort women” were merely prostitutes who were hired by brokers. Back then, it was legal job just like Nevada State where prostitution is still legal in US. And majority of them were Japanese, and the rest was Korean and Taiwanese. During the WWII, US Army captured and interrogated 20 Korean prostitutes (comfort women) after the fall of Myitkyin, Burma in 1944 and issued an official report APO 689 (This official document is available at National Archives and Records Administrations). According to this official document, those Korean prostitutes were:

They lived in near-luxury in Burma in comparison to others. They lived well because their food and material was not heavily rationed and they had plenty of money with which to purchase desired articles. They were able to buy cloth,

shoes, cigarettes, and cosmetics to supplement the many gifts given to them by soldiers who had received "comfort bags" from home. While in Burma they amused themselves by participating in sports events with both officers and men, and attended picnics, entertainments, and social dinners. They had a phonograph and in the towns they were allowed to go shopping.

This doesn't sounds like "sexual slave"... If we still call these prostitutes as "sexual slave", then we must also call prostitutes in Nevada as "sexual slave" to be consistent.

I'd like to suggest removing this section [Chapter 15, page 469, line 914~920] from the 2014-2016 Draft History-Social Science Framework until Instructional Quality Commission could verify the historical facts further.

Sincerely,

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